

CLIP-PROMISE

September 12, 2013 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article)

There was a monetary crisis in England in the 17th century that began much earlier with the minting of coins that could be clipped of some of their value. It is described as follows by the Scottish preacher and college professor Alexander Whyte (1836-1921):

“Toward the end of the thirteenth century Edward the First, the English Justinian, brought a select colony of artists from Italy to England and gave them a commission to execute their best coinage for the English Mint. Deft and skilful as those artists were, the work they turned out was but rude and clumsy compared with some of the gold and silver and copper coins of our day. The Florentine artists took a sheet of gold or of silver and divided the sheet up with great scissors, and then they hammered the cut-out pieces as only a Florentine hammerman could hammer them. But, working with such tools, and working on such methods, those goldsmiths and silversmiths, with all their art, found it impossible to give an absolutely equal weight and worth to every piece of money that they turned out. For one thing, their cut and hammered coins had no carved rims round their edges as all our gold and silver and even copper coinage now has. And, accordingly, the clever rogues of that day soon discovered that it was far easier for them to take up a pair of shears and to clip a sliver of silver off the rough rim of a shilling, or a shaving of gold off a sovereign, than it was to take of their coats and work a hard day's work. Till to clip the coin of the realm soon became one of the easiest and most profitable kinds of crime. In the time of Elizabeth a great improvement was made in the way of coining the public money; but it was soon found that this had only made matters worse. For now, side by side with a pure and unimpaired and full-valued currency, and mingled up everywhere with it, there was the old, clipped, debased, and far too light gold and silver money; till troubles arose in connection with the coinage and circulation of the country that can only be told by Macaulay's extraordinarily graphic pen.

'It may well be doubted,' Macaulay says, in the twenty-first chapter of his History of England, 'whether all the misery which has been inflicted on the English nation in a quarter of a century by bad Kings, bad Ministers, bad Parliaments, and bad Judges was equal to the misery caused in a single year by bad crowns and bad shillings. ... when the great instrument of exchange became thoroughly deranged all trade and all industry were smitten as with a palsy. Nothing could be purchased without a dispute. Over every counter there was wrangling from morning to night. The employer and his workmen had a quarrel as regularly as Saturday night came round. On a fair day or a market day the clamours, the disputes, the reproaches, the taunts, the curses, were incessant. No merchant would contract to deliver goods without making some stipulation about the quality of the coin in which he was to be paid. The price of the necessities of life, of shoes, of ale, of oatmeal, rose fast. The bit of metal called a shilling the labourer found would not go so far as sixpence. ... Meanwhile, at every session of the Old Bailey the most terrible example of

coiners and clippers was made. Hurdles, with four, five, six wretches convicted of counterfeiting or mutilating the money of the realm, were dragged month after month up Holborn Hill” (Alexander Whyte, “Bunyan Characters Third Series: The Holy War: Clip-Promise”).

In his book *The Holy War*, John Bunyan made spiritual application of England’s clip coin problem. He invented a “notorious villain” named “clip-promise,” who weakened and debased God’s promises. Satan, of course, is the chief clip-promise and he has many servants occupied with this work throughout the world. Even the true believer can be an unwitting participant in this evil work by his attitude toward and neglect of God’s promises. Yea, I can clip the promises of God in my own life by unbelief and disobedience.

“The grace of God is like a bullion mass of purest gold. Moses and David and Isaiah and Hosea and Paul and Peter and John are the inspired artists who have commissioned to take that bullion and out of it to cut and beat and smelt and shape and stamp and superscribe the promises and then to issue the promises as currency in the market of salvation. It is these royal coins, imaged and superscribed in the Royal likeness, that Clip-Promise so mutilated, debased and abused” (Alexander Whyte).

Consider some promises of God that are often clipped:

Promise of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6-7)

“The very house of Israel herself, the very Mint-house, Tower Hill, and Lombard Street of Israel herself, was full of false coiners and clippers of the promises; as full as ever England was at her very worst. Israel clipped her Messianic promises and lived upon the clippings instead of upon the coin. Her coming Christ, and His salvation already begun, were the true spiritual currency of Old Testament times; while round that central Image of her great promise there ran an outside rim of lesser promises that all took their true and their only value from Him whose image and superscription stood within. But those besotted and infatuated men of Israel, instead of entering into and living by the great spiritual promises given to them in their Messiah, made lands, and houses, and meat, and drink, all the Messiah they cared for” (Whyte).

Promise of salvation through Jesus alone (John 14:6)

This promise is clipped in a thousand ways. It is clipped whenever it is stated or even hinted that salvation can be found through anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ. It is even clipped by “evangelicals” today who say that they don’t know and can’t be sure of the destiny of those who do not trust Christ personally in this life.

Promise of salvation through grace alone (Romans 11:6)

This promise is clipped by baptismal regenerationists and sacramentalists and by anyone who adds any form of works to grace for salvation.

Promise of the Bible's infallible inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

This promise is clipped by anyone who claims or hints that the Bible is anything less than the divinely inspired Word of God in whole and in part.

Promise of the efficacy of God's Word (Psa. 119:11, 105)

These promises are clipped not only by those who attack God's Word to weaken it, but also by those who neglect God's Word, for its efficacy is only in the using of it.

Promise of answered prayer (James 5:16)

This promise is clipped not only by those who question God's faithfulness in answering prayer but also by those who neglect private and corporate prayer. To neglect prayer debases the promise of God in my own life as well as in the lives of those who are influenced by my habits.

Promise of God's supply (Mat. 6:33; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; Hebrews 13:5-6)

These promises are clipped by those who fail to put God first in their lives. It is clipped by those who neglect God's house for business or sports. It is clipped by those who pursue the wealth of this world rather than eternal wealth, by those who fall for "get rich quick" schemes, by those who borrow and put themselves into bondage to man so that they neglect their duties to God.

Promise of God's care (Philippians 4:6; 1 Peter 5:7)

This promise is clipped by those who fret instead of trust, who seek help from man rather than God, who become desperate and foolish in their actions.

Promise pertaining to giving (Mal. 3:16)

This promise is clipped by those who find an excuse not to give to support the house of God and the work of God.

Promise of the armor of God (Eph. 6:13)

This promise is clipped by those who fail to put on God's armor and to stand against the devil.

Promise of Christ's imminent return (Mat. 24:44)

This promise is clipped by those who have spiritualized the prophecies and by those who mock the pre-trib Rapture doctrine and by those who are "building the kingdom now" rather than preaching the gospel and watching for Christ's return.

“After this, my Lord apprehended Clip-Promise. Now, because he was a notorious villain, for by his doings much of the king's coin was abused, therefore he was made a public example. He was arraigned and judged to be set first in the pillory, then to be whipped by all the children and servants in Mansoul, and then to be hanged till he was dead. Some may wonder at the severity of this man's punishment, but those that are honest traders in Mansoul they are sensible of the great abuse that one clipper of promises in little time may do in the town of Mansoul; and, truly, my judgment is that all those of his name and life should be served out even as he” (John Bunyan The Holy War).

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